



# 2004 Session Update

17th Legislative District



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Visit <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov> for  
news and information from the  
House Republican Caucus.

## 2004 Legislative Mailing Restrictions

I will attempt to keep you informed about the issues mentioned in this mailer and others that come before the 2004 Legislature. Unfortunately, due to election year mailing restrictions, my ability to communicate with the people I represent is severely limited.

Thankfully, I am allowed to respond to ALL specific, written requests from the citizens of the 17<sup>th</sup> District. If you would like to be updated on the happenings in the Legislature, please send a letter or E-mail to my office regarding your interest.

February 2004

Dear Friends,

The Legislature began January 12, and the scheduled 60-day session will be fast paced and intense as lawmakers tackle many critical issues, including reviving our state's economy, putting people back to work, and restoring public trust in government.

To help accomplish those goals, I am working on policy proposals and strategies aimed at sharpening the state's competitive edge, encouraging business growth and creating new employment opportunities.

We made some important progress during the 2003 session toward achieving those goals, including an overhaul of the unemployment insurance system, reforms to workers' compensation, and passage of a no-new-taxes budget — all of which proves that when the Legislature comes together in a bi-partisan manner we can create a more positive environment in which jobs can be created and retained. While I'm proud of last session's accomplishments, we still have much to do. We must remain focused and committed to getting Washington back on track.

The Legislature has a choice: move forward with an agenda aimed at cultivating a strong business environment that will attract and keep jobs, or allow partisan politics to destroy opportunities to get Washington back to work. It won't be easy to rebuild our state's economy, but if we put aside bipartisan political rivalries, the path to sustainable economic vitality will be smoother.

Please take a few minutes to review my newsletter, and if you have questions or concerns about the issues I am working on, please give me a call, or write to me in Olympia. I'm always glad to hear from you, and welcome your thoughts and ideas.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your state Representative.

Sincerely,

Marc Boldt  
State Representative  
17<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



## HOLDING THE LINE ON STATE SPENDING



One of my top priorities this session will be **holding the line on new taxes and spending**. While Washington's economy has started to slowly improve, our state has very little in reserve funds. This means our budget remains in a precarious position.

During the session we will be making minor changes to the budgets to compensate for changes in school enrollment, prison populations, state-paid health care services and other necessary costs.

Last month the governor proposed a short-sighted supplemental budget that uses at least \$158 million in one-time money to pay for new, ongoing expenditures. His proposal would leave only \$172 million in reserve. The governor's budget proposal would spend down our reserves to a dangerous level, and if enacted, would leave Washington more than \$1 billion in the red by next biennium. This line of thinking is simply unacceptable. His approach abandons the progress made last year to enact a no-new-taxes budget.

Despite ongoing budget pressures, I will stand firm against new taxes and spending. Families have had to make hard decisions in these tough economic times, and I believe government should do the same. Now is not the time to spend more; instead it's time to build up our reserves so we don't end up with a budget deficit again. As the lead Republican on the House Children and Family Services Committee, we were forced to make difficult cutbacks in funding some

social service programs. If we aren't wise in our budgeting this session, we will have to make more drastic cuts next session.

## CREATING A RELIABLE RAINY-DAY FUND

We also must strengthen the state's spending limit and create a reliable, constitutional rainy day fund. The Initiative-601 spending limit exerted a strong control on state spending from the General Fund during the first several years after it was passed into law in 1993. Even while revenues were strong, spending was capped at relatively low rates of growth, which allowed the state to return money to the taxpayers, build strong budget reserves, and address emergent needs without harm to core services.

In the last four years the I-601 statute has been amended numerous times to weaken its provisions or disregard them entirely. Legislation was introduced in the 2003 session in both the House and Senate to correct and strengthen the 601 limit, so that it is again an effective lid on spending, and to establish a constitutional rainy day fund that would ensure the state has ready reserves in the event of an economic downturn such as we have experienced the last two years. We must strengthen the state's spending limit and create a reliable, constitutional rainy day fund.

## EDUCATION: PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS

We are fortunate to live in a time when learning options are varied and ever-growing. I will be working to increase web-based educational opportunities that allow more students access to individualized instruction, with the support and accountability of a public school.



When teachers strike, it affects the entire community. This fall the Marysville teachers' strike was a stark reminder of how little is achieved when teachers decide to walk out of the classrooms. After the longest teacher strike in state history, nothing was resolved. It is critical that the Legislature clarify that teacher strikes are illegal. We're developing other options to address teacher strikes as well. It is unacceptable for the education of our children – the paramount duty of the state – to be placed at the mercy of labor disputes.

## WORKING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

I will again be working to create an atmosphere where community-based organizations are encouraged to work alongside state social service agencies. The efficiencies provided by collaboration from state and local agencies will provide better services and for more people in the long run.

# 2004 Session Update

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION: IT'S TIME FOR ACTION, NOT STUDY



Although the Legislature made strides toward improving Washington's workers' compensation program, we still have a long way to go. Late last year the Department of Labor and Industries announced a 9.8 percent rate increase, effective this month. This comes just one year after the department imposed a 29 percent rate hike.

I have heard from people in almost every sector – small businesses, non-profits, social service, health care organizations and others – that these rate increases are hurting their ability to be profitable. This, in turn, hurts families who work for those employers. The increases also push us backward in our effort to create a more friendly business climate in Washington.

Now it's time to get to work. Without action – without **real** reforms – the burden of a broken workers' compensation system will continue to drag down employers and eliminate jobs in our state. We need to get to the heart of the program and make it more cost-effective, see that workers are treated fairly and help businesses keep costs under control.

We should also look at opening up the industrial insurance system to let insurance carriers – not just the state – offer workers' compensation insurance to all Washington employers.

Workers' compensation reform will continue to be a top priority for us in

the 2004 legislative session. Only by tackling these major, substantive reforms will we create jobs and restore the public's trust in government.

## TORT REFORM: IT IS IMPORTANT TO EVERYONE

Over the past several years the number of personal injury lawsuits – and their award amounts – have skyrocketed. The fallout from that trend has seeped into every aspect of our lives, raising the price of our medical insurance, adding on to the cost of a new home, and forcing our doctors to close their doors because of rising malpractice coverage rates.

Between 1994 and 2001, the typical medical malpractice award jumped 176 percent to \$1 million. That, of course, increases the amount doctors and hospitals must pay for insurance to protect themselves — which drives up your costs in the form of higher out-of-pocket premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

The Legislature is in a position to do something about this problem by creating a more sensible tort system. In 2003 the Senate passed, but the House failed to consider, legislation that would have implemented comprehensive liability reforms. These tort reform measures, proven effective in other states, would have helped, for example, bring down the costs of insurance for doctors and small employers. If we continue to ignore the problem the crisis will spiral out of control impacting everything from what we buy and eat to local employers' ability to stay in business.

## BRINGING BALANCE TO THE COURTS

Our forefathers founded this nation with the intention of having public policy created by the people, through their elected representatives. Recent court decisions have raised the issue as to whether the balance of power in our country has shifted away from the people to unelected men and women in the courts. Monumental public policy matters were decided by a slim majority of unelected judges instead of by the people through their elected representatives, after a great deal of debate. It's important to remember our system requires that before a law ever goes before the courts, two independent, co-equal branches of government – the legislative (House and Senate) and executive (governor) – have determined it to be constitutional. There should be no reason for the courts to make policy decisions, but instead, they should be enforcing the intent of the law.

This session I am supporting efforts to put important public policy decisions back into the hands of the people.



## MORAL VALUES

I believe it would be best if government stayed out of the issue of moral values, however, there have been several state, local, and legal decisions that have gone against the values which make up our country's strong foundation. As your state representative there have been times I've had to vote on legislation that did not uphold the ideals our country was built upon. I will continue to uphold my oath of office, while at the same time remain true to the values that have made our great nation what it is today.

## CRACKING DOWN ON DRUNK DRIVERS

This session I'm sponsoring legislation to expand the crime of vehicular homicide to cover persons who are driving when their licenses have been suspended for a drunk-driving offense.

I decided to sponsor House Bill 2467 after reading of two separate cases in which a person whose had been suspended because of a DUI offense, went out, and drove under the influence again and caused the death of another person. This is simply reprehensible and must be stopped. HB 2467 has received a hearing the House Judiciary Committee and I'm hopeful it will be pass the Legislature this session.



## The 2004 legislative session: Get involved!



Information about the 2004 legislative session is as close as your keyboard and your television. There are plenty of ways to get involved and stay informed on issues important to you.

### Information on the Internet:

#### State government:

[www.access.wa.gov](http://www.access.wa.gov)

#### Legislative information:

[www.hrc.leg.wa.gov](http://www.hrc.leg.wa.gov)

### Understanding the legislative process:

- Go to the House of Representative's web site: [www.leg.wa.gov/house/](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/)
- Click on "General Info"
- There you will find the "Guide to Effective Legislative Participation" and information about the law-making process

### Best way to check the status of bills:

- Go to the Legislature's web site: [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)
- Click on "Bill Info"
- There you will find a host of information relating to each bill passing through the Legislature

### Other ways to get information and assistance:

We would be happy to speak to your group, organization or school. Topics might include:

- Issues before the Legislature
- How does the legislative process work?
- What it's like to be a legislator
- Issues specific to the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

### Watch TVW:

TVW (TV Washington), a non-profit public affairs network, broadcasts the Legislature on cable TV throughout the state. Check with your local cable company to see if it carries TVW, or call TVW for programming information at (360) 586-5555, or visit its website at [www.tvw.org](http://www.tvw.org).

### Ask for assistance:

Legislators are elected to serve you. If you are facing challenges working with a state agency, contact me to see how I can help.